

and the President and to increase outreach and outreach to veterans. This bill also directs the SBA administrator to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Service Corps of Retired Executives called SCORE, an organization that provides advice and technical assistance to small businesses free of charge through a nationwide network of volunteers.

Finally, this bill establishes a 5 percent government procurement goal for veteran-owned business and authorizes SBA to make loans to self-employed individuals or owners of small businesses who are called to active duty to assist them with potential losses and disruption caused by their return to active duty.

I encourage all of my colleagues when this bill comes to the floor to come together during this historic time of year and vote for legislation that provides our veterans with the opportunities they need and deserve to succeed. The Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act is a comprehensive approach to ensuring that the backbone of our Nation no longer shuts off but hence forward embraces and reaches out to America's service men and women.

CUBAN RAFTERS TREATED WORSE THAN CATTLE BY U.S. COAST GUARD

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, the inscription on the Statue of Liberty refers to this great country of ours as the mother of exiles which requests: Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses of your teeming shore; send these tempest tossed to me.

But, Mr. Speaker, today I find myself asking if the torch of freedom no longer shines for those who risk life and limb in search of liberty in this great country. As the vanguard of democracy, our country, the United States of America, must set the standards to be emulated. Today, however, the actions reportedly taken by the U.S. Coast Guard in south Florida against Cuban rafters could cast a solemn shadow over this country and could stain our proud history as defenders of the oppressed and protectors of human rights worldwide.

According to the video footage obtained by news sources in Miami, six Cuban refugees reached U.S. territorial waters today in the early afternoon and were subsequently approached by U.S. Coast Guard boats. These Coast Guard vessels opened water cannons on the rafters causing some of them to fall overboard. As the rafters started to swim to safety, the smaller Coast Guard vessels pursued them and pushed them against the sand, corralling them

like cattle. Actually in this country we afford animals much better treatment than that.

It is reported that only after Coast Guard officers had completed their attack on these defenseless freedom seekers did they proceed to take them into custody. This is something we expect from oppressive regimes who care little, if anything, for human life, but this is not what we expect from our fine United States Coast Guard. Members of the Coast Guard are valiant men and women who proudly serve their country and who have saved hundreds and indeed thousands of lives off of our south Florida shores. I am sure that they did not welcome this tragic order today. We expect the United States Coast Guard to enforce the laws, but we do not and should not tolerate violations of the basic human rights of those seeking refuge from persecution.

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We expect the United States Coast Guard to protect U.S. territory against all enemies, but we do not and will not tolerate attacks on defenseless victims such as the survivors of Castro's brutal dictatorship. If there is one entity which survivors of Castro's oppression have looked to with respect and admiration, if there was one entity which Cuban refugees trusted and confided in, it is the U.S. Coast Guard.

Has their trust been misplaced? I hope not. It is unconscionable for an entity of the U.S. Government charged with the responsibility of enforcing our laws to violate them and employ excessive force, including the use of water cannons and mace, against those who present no threat to the personal security of our men and women in uniform nor to the security of our great country.

These actions merit an immediate and comprehensive investigation. I have asked the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Coast Guard Commandant and other senior officials to take action regarding these Coast Guard officers who gave the orders violating the rights of those refugees and that appears to have violated U.S. guidelines on how to deal with such situations.

I ask my colleagues to join me in this request and express their indignation over this display of aggression. This is not what America stands for.

I have sent this letter to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright this afternoon and a similar letter, as I have said, to President Bill Clinton, Vice President AL GORE, Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater and Coast Guard Commandant Admiral James Lloyd.

I say, your personal attention to this matter is greatly appreciated to ensure due diligence in the investigation and resolution of this case. This is a matter of grave concern; and to enlist their co-

operation for an immediate investigation of the events which unfolded off the coast of South Florida today, June 29, between Cuban rafters seeking asylum and U.S. Coast Guard officials, and I would like to place this letter in the RECORD.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, June 29, 1999.

Hon. MADELEINE ALBRIGHT,
Secretary, Department of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: I am writing on a matter of grave concern and to enlist your cooperation for an immediate investigation of the events which unfolded off the coast of Florida, today, June 29th between Cuban rafters seeking asylum and U.S. Coast Guard officials.

According to the video footage by news sources in Miami, six Cuban refugees reached U.S. territorial waters in the early afternoon and were subsequently approached by U.S. Coast Guard boats which opened water cannons on the rafters, causing some of them to fall overboard. As the rafters started to swim to safety, the smaller Coast Guard vessels pursued them and pushed them against the sand. It is reported that only after the Coast Guard had completed its attack on these defenseless freedom seekers, did they proceed to take them into custody.

These actions merit an immediate and comprehensive investigation. If confirmed, I ask that action be taken regarding these Coast Guard officials who gave the orders which violated the basic human rights of these Cuban refugees and appears to have violated U.S. guidelines on how to deal with such situations.

Your personal attention to this matter is greatly appreciated to ensure due diligence in the investigation and resolution of this case.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN,
Member of Congress.

LET US CONTINUE TO BE A NATION THAT BELIEVES IN GOD

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this time is given to many of us to express our concerns and our views on the day's activities and legislative initiatives or particular issues that impact our district.

I thought I would comment today on the actions of the House that just occurred on H. Con. Res. 94. It was a vigorous debate, and I think in the true spirit of our Founding Fathers we can be very proud of that. Obviously, those who proposed an amendment, a resolution, that would cause or ask the people of this Nation to, under God, to humble and reconcile themselves with God and with one another have a true commitment and passion.

Further, as the resolution goes on, they urge all Americans to unite in seeking the face of God through humble prayer.

I believe in the Old and New Testaments. In fact, a favorite verse of mine

is John 3:16, for God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever shall believe in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life.

In the Christian faith, that son is called Jesus; and for those of us who believe, we believe within our heart, it is a conversion, it is a commitment and passion about our personal and religious beliefs.

Even as I stand here, I think many of us can note that above my head are the words, In God We Trust, but we might not be able to see some additional words that are behind me on this wooden border. It says, justice and tolerance.

I would not want the world or the Nation to believe that the defeat of H. Con. Res. 94 had anything to do with the personal beliefs of the Members of the United States Congress. It had more to do with our understanding of our constitutional underpinnings, the premise of the separation of church and State.

No, it does not mean that wherever I go I cannot utter a personal prayer to whoever I believe in. It may be Allah, it may be Jesus or God or some other name, Jehovah, that I am not familiar with. I do not stop anyone from doing that. Frankly, as a mother, I tell my children whenever they are in time of stress, offer a word of prayer; my belief, my teachings that I have taught my family.

For us to go and solicit on the floor of the House, urging all Americans to unite in seeking the face of God through humble prayer is not respecting and not tolerating those who are different from us. This Nation was founded on the grounds that there are those who are escaping religious persecution.

I would hesitate and would not like for the vote today to be cast about by those who want to spin it and say that we defeated an opportunity for reconciliation, an opportunity for prayer. I hope this Nation will pray in whichever way it chooses, as it is a diverse and religiously diverse community. In fact, I hope the clergy of this land heard the debate and maybe independent of government will rise up and call for a day of prayer where all of them will come to the United States Capitol, their capitol, their place, where they can come, it is free for anyone to come, and acknowledge whichever god they so desire.

I hope whatever day of worship one has that they will kneel, however they pray, and ask for this Nation to be healed and unified.

H. Con. Res. 94 had no place for the United States Congress to demand and call upon this Nation to pray in any certain way or humble themselves in any certain way.

So I hope that we can see the vote as a positive; that we remain on the day

or the eve of July 4, Independence Day, when this fledgling Nation became a unified country, pledging allegiance to the flag of the United States, under God, acknowledging that but also a Nation that believed in the Bill of Rights, that no matter where one came from, no matter who their God was, they had the right to be an American and they had the right to the privileges of that wonderful equality, to be able to pray as they so desired.

I hope that we will be able to do actions, as one of my colleagues did say.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I hope we will pass the hate crimes bill. I hope we will support Head Start and education. There are many things we can do to show ourselves compassionate. I hope that we will find a way to end school violence and gun violence. I hope that we will come together to work on these solutions, no matter what religious background we have, for the betterment of this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that we continue to be a Nation that believes.

THE SURPLUS, NATIONAL FORESTS, THE METRIC SYSTEM, AND THE DEFEAT OF THE NATIONAL DAYS OF PRAYER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to briefly mention three unrelated topics of national importance.

First, the headlines this morning say that we will now have a surplus that is \$1 trillion larger than we thought it was going to be over the next 15 years. This is the direct result of the Congress changing hands after the 1994 elections and becoming much more fiscally conservative. We should all be pleased about this.

I remember in late 1993 or early 1994 when Alice Rivlin, who was then the President's director of the Office of Management and Budget, put out a shocking memo. She predicted then that we would have deficits, yearly losses, of over \$1 trillion by the year 2010, and between \$4 trillion and \$5 trillion a year by 2030 if major changes were not made.

If we had allowed that to happen, our economy would have been devastated. Our children, who would have then been in the primes of their lives by 2030, would not have been able to buy homes or cars or almost anything else, as is the case today in many countries around the world. So we have made remarkable fiscal progress over the last 4 or 5 years.

A word of caution is necessary. We are still almost \$6 trillion in debt. This still leaves us on very thin ice economically, but making good progress. Yet from what everyone up here is saying, people are starting to promise everything to everybody.

I simply rise tonight to say that I hope we will not spend this money before we get it. The best economists in the world cannot tell us with absolute certainty where the stock market and the economy will be 1 or 2 years from now. Yet, we are already gleefully celebrating and making major spending plans based on money we hope to get 15 years from now. We will get it if we remain fiscally conservative, but I say again, very simply, let us not spend it before we get it. If we do, we will do much more harm than good.

Secondly, at a hearing of the Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health this afternoon, it was brought out once again that we are now growing about 23 billion board feet of new trees and timber each year in our national forests. Yet we are allowing only 3 billion board feet, or only one-seventh of the new growth, to be cut.

There is about 6 billion board feet of dead or dying trees and timber in the national forests. In other words, we are allowing trees to be cut at only half the number that are dead or dying.

In addition, it was brought out that there are 500 million acres of forest land in the United States which are not in the national forests. This is an amount of land equal to about 900 Great Smoky Mountain National Parks. People look at a map of this country on one small page in a book and they simply do not realize how big this Nation is. Yet there are environmental extremists who just do not want us to cut any trees.

If we are going to have healthy forests, we have to cut some trees. If we are going to have reasonably priced homes, books, toilet paper, newspapers, magazines, we have to cut some trees. And as shocking as it may to some who have heard only one side of propaganda from these environmental extremists, when we are growing 23 billion board feet each year in our national forests and cutting only 3 billion. We should cut much more so that our forests can be healthier and so that prices can be lower on almost everything.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to read on the front page of yesterday's Washington Times that many States are now moving away from the metric system. I am pleased that we gave the States some flexibility on this in last year's highway bill. This was something the Federal Government and a few powerful liberal elitists tried to force on us, but the American people never accepted the metric system. Unfortunately, this has cost our government at all levels and business many billions of dollars.

There was never a good reason to go to the metric system in this country. We have made this very expensive effort only because it would be helpful to a few large multinational corporations and because some people unfortunately think that anything that is done in